

Purpose of a Cover Letter

A cover letter is a business correspondence that should accompany each resume you send to a prospective employer. The cover letter serves primarily as an introduction and marketing tool, explaining who you are and why you are sending your resume. Also, it is referred to as a letter of application or inquiry, a well-written cover letter will enhance your resume by providing a more detailed description of skills and experiences that relate to the organization or position you seek.

Unlike the resume, which can be mass-produced, a cover letter has stronger impact if it is written individually to target the particular organization or position. Whenever possible, address your letter to an individual within the organization rather than "To Whom It May Concern." Resources for researching names of individuals (and job titles) within large national organizations are available online. A quick call to the company's main phone line or Human Resources department is also an appropriate way to obtain the name and position title of the contact. If you use these resources and still cannot find the information, addressing your letter to the Search Committee or Human Resources Director is a potential option.

Structure & Format

Typically, a cover letter is three to five paragraphs long. It's your chance to come across more personally on the page but, like a resume, a cover letter should be as concise as possible and not exceed one page.

Since the opening paragraph serves as an introduction, indicate how you discovered the position or organization and why you're interested. Your middle paragraph(s) should communicate precisely what you have to offer the employer. Select details and skills from past experiences that relate to the organization or position. Do not just restate the information presented on your resume. You'll also want to avoid making your degree the focus of your cover letter. Instead, add context to your experiences; highlight specific accomplishments or projects that demonstrate the skills the employer is looking for. Connect your background as closely as possible to the particular job to demonstrate a good fit.

As with a resume, be prepared to substantiate any information you include in the letter. Do not attempt to oversell yourself with exaggerated claims. Be sure to also express your desire to work for this particular company/institution. One way to do this is to connect your own background and interests to the company's mission statement. Employers want employees who are just not skilled but who are also invested in where they work. Your closing paragraph should reiterate your interest in the position, ask for an opportunity to speak in person, indicate the easiest way to contact you, and thank them for their time.

Final Notes

A cover letter is the first piece of information a potential employer sees about you. If effective, it should arouse interest and encourage the employer to move on to your resume with stronger conviction. The tone of the letter should emphasize ways you can fulfill their needs. Write clearly and concisely. Pay particular attention to grammar, typing and spelling. If submitting a hard copy, use high quality paper stock that matches your resume. Ideally, ask someone (a staff member at the Career Center or someone at the UVM Writing Center) to proofread the letter for impact, tone, and grammar.

124 Pine Street #3
Burlington, VT 05401
April 3, 2020
Ben & Jerry's

Human Resources Department
30 Community Drive
South Burlington, VT 05403

Dear Search Committee:

Please accept these application materials for the Public Relations Internship for the Ben & Jerry's company. This internship was brought to my attention by Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR). Not only am I interested in further developing my skills in marketing and public outreach, but I am particularly attracted to Ben and Jerry's because of its historic reputation as being socially conscious. The company's three-part mission statement speaks to my principles and reflects the core values of my field of study, Community Entrepreneurship.

At my ongoing position at Growing Vermont—University of Vermont's (UVM) student-run and locally-based store, I have gained valuable experience in marketing products from a socially conscious, community-oriented and ecologically-friendly platform. While at Growing Vermont, I have distinguished myself as the organization's Marketing Coordinator by forging a new partnership with UVM's Feel Good, a non-profit organization that sells food to raise funds and awareness for world hunger. As part of establishing this new, symbiotic partnership, I have helped coordinate a benefit concert sponsored by the two organizations to bring awareness to both Feel Good's mission and Growing Vermont's products. Of course, such endeavors are never completed by a single person; as the Marketing Coordinator, I have supervised a dynamic team of five colleagues to pursue viral marketing campaigns, organizational partnerships and joint outreach initiatives. I believe that my ability to effectively communicate and foster a collaborative work-process would make me an effective member of the marketing team at Ben and Jerry's.

Enclosed, please find my resume and intern questionnaire. I look forward to an opportunity to further discuss this position and my qualifications. Please do not hesitate to contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at alex.student@uvm.edu with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alexander Student (Signature)
Alexander Student (Typed)